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SENTENCES IN PROSE AND VERSE.

SELECTED BY WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

II.

We deal with the best possible people, assured we shall never admire them, while a little flavoring of human nature would render them attractive. They are like store or green-house fruit—any old apple, wild, is better, especially for cooking. It may be asked that what Employment, Art, or Science soever a man strongly inclines unto, if he continues therein and becomes fixed, he shall obtain a proper Genius, which will mightily assist him in that art.—*Tryon* [*On Dreams*].

One of the dreadful figures of the village is the sexton, old, extremely bent (almost humpbacked, in fact), with a great brown wig, dirty and clouded with snuff ; he looks like death taking stock.

When autumn comes every one but the poet runs to gather his harvest. To him, the whole year is an autumn with melancholy winds.

Men scatter and waste angelic susceptibilities on poor and barren places. They cast themselves away on the hopeless opportunity, yet as the farmer's skill, the careful culture of the interior is in planting wisely, and laying up good seed to sow again.

Amid the plain faces of each village nature plants one child of incredible beauty, to convince us that her powers are not asserted, and that, in spite of all our prose, she can anew create the Venus. In the worst of months, there is one serene, sunny day.

If we reach no practical results in life, we shall one day reach the end, which will perhaps be a kind of result if we know it.

The fortunate man is not therefore wise nor happy. The true meaning of fortune is, that which occurs fortuitously.

To associate with famous people is taxed enormously. We must not only beg alms of them, but of their fortieth cousins, who crave their penny—the great man tows a fleet of skiffs to George's banks.

We may be impatient as moralists, because we are too good or are not good enough ; if writers, because no one will read our works ;

if parents, because our children were ill-constructed ; if friendly, because our friend withdraws. To finish these pieces is the plan of the novice. Nature cannot hurry, nor can take time half enough to accomplish her everlasting stint, which she ever begins newly.

It is singular that we have not, each of us, human nature enough, such as it is, in ourselves, to prevent us from craving it so madly in our opposites.

Looking at the scarred trunk of the pine, and the delicately graceful sprays of the bending birches, the aboriginal trees, we yet have no dream of their origins, grounded so mysteriously in the occult. Nature provokes us forever to enter her beautiful provinces and coöperate with her—endless suggestion and nothing revealed. The wheelwright chips up the butt of an oak to fashion his hub for the farmer's dung-cart.

The Bible—that is, *the book* ; a somewhat exclusive title in the face of many Bodleians.

No profession is sweet to its professor ; each one hates his trade and task.

Man has been endlessly waved aside by nature. She made him and gave him eyes to see her, and then forgot she had such a pretty baby. And so he asks forever, “Mother, who art thou ?” She has also forgotten to answer his question.

Just these low, triste fields ; just this cold, reserved, prudent world ; not Italy, not Arabia, not Persepolis for us.

In spite of what we can do, or can resolve to do, we cannot overstep the ineradicable thread across life’s threshold, spun by temperament and training—that transparent line is the brick wall of our state prison.

Man is a pretty, contracted beast, without a satisfaction or a moment of learned friendship, one joy in memory, one hope in the present, or a gleam of knowledge about the future ; his very teeth are artificial, and credited like his eating-house ticket.

An art of itself, thin and naked, in reality a mere insipid thing, unless it be clad and seasoned with some other learning—an art always hungry, always starving, and like Mice feeding on stolen Cates. Yet I know not with what boldness in the midst of trifles and fables, like Tithonus Grasshoppers, the Lycian Frogs, the Myrmidon Emmets, promising to themselves immortal fame and glory.—*Cornelius Agrippa [of poetry].*

How ridiculous appear the doings of others, how wise and admirably disposed our own ; they are fools, brainless ; we are so wise and witty—our very apologies are worshipful.

A perfectly homely landscape, seamed with toppling walls, seamed with mossy apple trees ; everywhere a cold, brown grass over the dry fields. If the sun shines, it shines without warmth ; if it sets in gold, it gilds the shingle of wretches. The woods are not at all picturesque, the birds that fly through them faintly colored, and from the low, wet dells where the smoky maples lean in their bareness, a cold, despairing damp rises, grave-like and clammy. Nor are the poverty-stricken uplands better, with a few gray stones everywhere split up into little rude fields. The farmers and their men are a cold, selfish, taciturn flock, conversant alone with their homely arts, and hating and spiteful to their superiors in fortune. No building partakes of the meanest beauty, the houses are slight shelters of board, cold and unfurnished as the hearts of their inhabitants, and guarded by savage, half-starved dogs, who growl and snap at the legs of wayfarers, as if they owed them an indulgence.

A lie on the lips of beauty is sweeter than a decalogue of truths from a homely mouth.

Life is a tendency. That only which lies behind it and which it foreshadows has a questionable value. We perceive a kind of force, and credit it with a relation to something that is better than the performance. Some additional interest arises, possibly, from a low probability of future development.

There are men who live by their good days, or can distinguish them from those commonly bad. J. H. said, "I am growing old very fast, and plainly perceive it ; in twenty days I am now unable to get those four or five good days I once had."

We should work over our writing, as the smith works his bar of iron.

It matters not how much fanciful expression and store of learning you have appropriated or inherited, without you also possess that certain constructive ability which can just put it in order. Your exquisite seal bears no impression, because it wants a ring. Hawthorne's ability as a writer and his literary success came almost wholly of his constructive power—his mind was a sort of cellar.

To see the thin, new moon, and a glittering evening star, hung close above the orange ring of the shadowy horizon, and the ada-

mantine blue of the low mountain, so clear and rich, the mirror of repose.

When we observe what dreaded tyrants, emperors, and rulers have accomplished, when we fairly measure the repute of poets, the culture of artists, the methods of science, the frantic loves of youth, the blackness of palsied age, we might be more content with our own weakness, or believe a little less in the majesty of the race we so pride ourselves upon.

No matter how narrow our sphere, how wide our failures, we should resolve to accept these crosses in good temper, seeing we have inherited them, and cannot add to our available stock.

We can never exhaust thought nor the sea. We can possess neither in full, yet both may command our admiration, and we may sail on the surface of both.

Fertile wit, complicating fancy, streams of learning, love of creating, and enough experiments, may all fall like lead in the mud for lack of a little art to serve as wings. Good intentions will not fly a kite.

Raphael was a cunning servant of the arts and religion of his time, but his force as an artist over-ruled that unartistic element, and was equal to floating Greek mythology in a Christian tub.

The difference in talent is greater than the difference in its rewards. Society never ceases grumbling at its own performances, and its first creations are classes—a tax or a tyrant its racy *bon bouche*.

Hawthorne had a soft, brocaded-silk side in his character, which no contact with sharps or flats could wrinkle, but slyly rustled on. At the time he was at the height of his fortune his parasites would come and “sit upon him,” until he was pressed into the politics of despair.

“It would be well,” say progressive religionists, “to contrive a new and adequate mythology from that of the nations pell-mell, as a compensatory allowance to the Procrustes-bed of the Jews. Children might still say the Lord’s Prayer, which is sufficiently omnivorous.”

We present the reverse of the Christian scheme: “Love thyself first; second, thy neighbor. Man is the little God; so found thy salvation on him. God has no existence save through man.”

To some it may seem unpleasing that the whole universe cannot help a man to a thought or perception more than he brought with

him originally fastened, as Prometheus was, to his sandstone ledge. Still, amid the snows of age, he hears the wail of the pitying unhelpful chorus, his last time-worn lullaby.

John Sterling had an excellent literary working talent, even if his manner surpasses his matter. He would have loved to be a pagan, but the dullness of the English liturgy crowded it out.

Keats's letters discover a kindly disposition for a poet. A driving, drifting, unmoored nature, with a partial exploration in the world around or within. He was a prospective madman, and died somewhat madly, though otherwise fatally diseased, of that yellow rattle-snake.—*Gifford.*

The poverty of a man's circumstance exfoliates from the poverty of his understanding. Day by day our possessions contract; to-morrow, we are bankrupts.

ON THE STUDY OF PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF F. W. J. VON SCHELLING, BY ELLA S. MORGAN.
[THE TWELFTH "ACADEMIC LECTURE."]

Particular phenomena and forms, which can be cognized only by experience, are necessarily preceded by that through which they are, namely, by matter or substance. Empiricism knows them only as bodies, that is, as matter with variable form; and even conceives ultimate matter, if it refers to it at all, as an indeterminate number of bodies of unchangeable form, which are therefore called atoms. Hence empiricism has no knowledge of the first unity, out of which everything in nature proceeds, and into which all returns.

In order to reach the essence of matter we must avoid the image of every particular form of it; for instance, every conception of matter as so-called inorganic or organic, because matter in itself is only the common source of these different forms. Considered absolutely it is the act of eternal self-contemplation of the absolute, in so far as it makes itself objective and real in this act. To show this being-in-itself of matter, as well as the way in which particular things with the determinations of phenomena proceed out of it, is the province of philosophy.

Of the former (the being-in-itself of matter) I have spoken at length in the preceding lectures, and will therefore confine myself to the latter. The idea of every particular thing is simply one, and the